



June 13, 2018

**Re: On World Refugee Day, Congress should re-commit to refugee protection by supporting both humanitarian assistance and refugee resettlement through the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program.**

Dear Members of the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives,

On behalf of Amnesty International USA (“AIUSA”), and our two million members and activists in all 50 states, we write to urge Congress to uphold the U.S.’ longstanding, bipartisan commitment to welcome and resettle refugees from throughout the world, while continuing to robustly fund humanitarian assistance programs that support refugees and displaced persons throughout the world.

We are witnessing the highest levels of displacement in recorded history. Tens of millions of people spread throughout the world, have been forced from their homes because of wars and persecution. Some are living amidst a constant state of war, fearful their lives or that of their children could be taken at any moment; some are being persecuted because of who they are or what they believe; still others are forced from their home, like the Rohingya in Myanmar, shot at by the very governments that should be protecting them. All of those who fled deserve to have their human rights respected, protected, and fulfilled.

The numbers can feel overwhelming. Over 65 million people fleeing their homes, escaping persecution, torture, and war. Of this number, 22.5 million are refugees, over half of whom are under 18. The U.N. Refugee Agency estimates that there are over 1.2 million refugees in need of resettlement. Despite this overwhelming need, last year under 70,000 were resettled in a third country compared to 126,291 refugees the year before. The United States has drastically shrunk its refugee program over the last two fiscal years, with a devastatingly low refugee admissions goal of 45,000 in Fiscal Year (“FY”) 2018. As of the start of June 2018, the U.S. has not even resettled 15,000 refugees, with no indication that the Administration will even try and reach the lowered refugee admissions goal this year, as often occurs in the last quarter of fiscal years.

Resettlement as a durable solution for the world’s most vulnerable refugees, remains an essential tool to help refugees find permanent safety. While there are in fact millions of U.N. registered refugees, only a tiny fraction of them will ever be eligible for resettlement. Most refugees will either remain in the country to which they initially fled or voluntarily return to their home country. Both durable solutions must be supported by the international community and the U.S. must be a strong participant in ensuring these

pathways to safety. At the same time, resettlement remains a vital and far underutilized, durable solution.

Over many decades, the U.S. has invested in and built a robust network of service organizations spread throughout the country united by one principle – that the U.S. has a duty and responsibility to help those who have been forced from their country because of persecution. The U.S. Refugee Admissions Program (“USRAP”) is a public-private partnership that every American should be proud of. Yet, its future is at deep risk. From executive orders seeking to stop the program altogether to policies imposing onerous new requirements to the lowest refugee admissions goal in the history of the program – there seems to be no part of the USRAP that is not at risk today.

We urge Congress to reaffirm the U.S.’ proud tradition of resettling the world’s most vulnerable refugees. Specifically, we urge Congress to:

- Call on the Administration to ensure that every effort is made to reach the FY18 refugee admissions goal.
- Call on the President to set a refugee admissions goal of at least 75,000 refugees resettled in FY19, aligned more closely with both the global need and U.S. public’s capacity and desire to support refugees resettled here in the U.S.
- Sustain robust funding for humanitarian assistance for forcibly displaced people worldwide while also strongly supporting the USRAP.

When the United Nations established World Refugee Day, it did so to honor the courage, resilience, and strength that refugees show in the face of tremendous hardship. This year, AIUSA members across the country will be marking June 20<sup>th</sup> by taking actions to show the welcoming spirit that exists in every corner of our country. From writing to their elected leaders, hosting community dinners, volunteering at their local resettlement agency, and seeking out the chance to cosponsor a refugee family - AIUSA members are ready to welcome refugees. We only hope that U.S. policies will not continue to stand in their way.

On this World Refugee Day, we urge Members of Congress to stand alongside AIUSA members, and Americans across the country, by showing their support for refugees through support of humanitarian assistance programs and ensuring that refugees continue to have pathways to protection.

For more information, please contact Ryan Mace at 202.509.8185 or [rmace@aiusa.org](mailto:rmace@aiusa.org).

Sincerely,

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